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## Ideology and Structure in Giardinelli's *Santo Oficio de la memoria*

### Abstract

The article studies the most recent novel by Argentine novelist Mempo Giardinelli from the point of view of its polyphonic structure. *Santo Oficio* is compared to one of its models, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, and the respective modern and postmodern aesthetics of both novels are discussed. Giardinelli's approach in this ambitious novel is contrasted with that of major authors of the Latin American Boom. A family tree of the Domeniconelle family, the protagonists of *Santo Oficio*, is included.

### Keywords

Santo oficio de la memoria, Giardinelli, As I Lay Dying, William Faulkner, Argentine literature, novel

## Ideology and Structure in Giardinelli's *Santo Oficio de la memoria*

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In August of 1993, Mempo Giardinelli was awarded the prestigious Rómulo Gallegos Prize (previous winners include Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel García Márquez, and Mario Vargas Llosa) for his seventh novel *Santo Oficio de la memoria* (1991).<sup>1</sup> This official recognition helps to underscore a fact known by the readers of his previous novels: *La revolución en bicicleta* (1980), *El cielo con las manos* (1981), *¿Por qué prohibieron el circo?* (1983), *Luna caliente* (1983), *Qué solos se quedan los muertos* (1985), and his three collections of short stories: *Vidas ejemplares* (1982), *Antología personal* (1987), and *Castigo de Dios* (1993), namely that Giardinelli is one of the major writers of the Post-Boom, or to use the term he has coined and prefers, of “la democracia recuperada” ‘recovered democracy.’<sup>2</sup> By virtue of his determination not to repeat himself, Giardinelli has produced an impressive oeuvre characterized by highly polished though deceptively straightforward narratives. Giardinelli’s novels display technical and thematic originality without resorting to gimmickry. For him every project has an inner logic of its own that dictates the matching of content to form.

*Santo Oficio de la memoria* is written on the Faulknerian pattern of *As I Lay Dying* (1931).<sup>3</sup> As in Faulkner’s novel, all chapters are labelled and assigned to the consciousness of a character, and as neither author provides a table of contents, readers feel immersed in a seemingly random maelstrom of voices.<sup>4</sup> The primary difference in the structure of the two novels is one of scope: Faulkner’s has fifty-nine sections and fifteen narrators, while Giardinelli’s is made up of a hundred and six sections told by twenty-four narrators. Faulkner’s

encompasses the ordeals of the Bundren family for a few days, while Giardinelli's tells the story of the Domeniconelle family over a period of a hundred years (See Appendix 5 for a family tree). Another noteworthy feature of Giardinelli's poetics in *Santo Oficio de la memoria* is the inclusion of characters, who although dead, participate in the affairs of the living and are fully cognizant of family developments after their death. This adaptation of Rulfo's practice in *Pedro Páramo* (1955) is not surprising given the reverence Giardinelli holds for the Mexican author. In fact in *Santo Oficio* Giardinelli tells a story that Rulfo told him but never wrote.<sup>5</sup>

The multiplicity of discourses in Giardinelli's novel reflects the author's aesthetic and ideological embracing of polyphony. In the novel the story of the family and the history of Argentina in the twentieth century are told through multiple, competing, and often contradictory perspectives. Although there were traces of this in Giardinelli's first novel *La revolución en bicicleta*, where two discourses (in different narrative voices and times) tell the story of Bartolo, the determined but unlucky revolutionary who spends his life trying to overthrow the Paraguayan dictator Stroessner, this is a new and important development in Giardinelli's writing. Due to the extraordinary events that occur in *Luna caliente*, that novel required the use of the third person narration and free indirect speech in order to achieve its full effect as a thriller. This type of narration allows the reader close access to the psychology of the protagonist but avoids a purely subjective discourse that could be dismissed easily by the reader. Likewise the indirect free speech, while permitting a third person narration, limits the knowledge of the narrator and creates the necessary atmosphere of uncertainty.

In his next novel, *Qué solos se quedan los muertos*, following the paradigm of hard-boiled detective fiction, Giardinelli makes use of a first person narrator. As the exiled Argentine journalist, José Giustozzi, (an unwilling Philip Marlowe), is called upon by Carmen Rubiolo, a former girlfriend, to investigate the murder of her lover in Zacatecas, his thoughts turn increasingly to his militancy in Argentina and all the political violence experienced by his generation. The structure of the detective novel thus serves as a vehicle for an inquiry into the nature of violence, not only in crime but also in politics.

Different as the two works are, it is not difficult to see the transition from *Qué solos se quedan los muertos* to *Santo Oficio de la memoria*.

The many voices of *Santo Oficio* are an outgrowth and an expansion

of the personal, political and historical reflections of the narrator protagonist of *Qué solos se quedan los muertos*. To speak of a “transition” is in fact slightly misleading. Since Giardinelli actually began work on *Santo Oficio* as he was writing *Qué solos*, it would be more accurate to speak of a kind of “seepage” between the two novels. Giustozzi’s personal and political reflections about his generation’s experience in Argentina and in exile help *Qué solos* transcend the formulaic bounds of the hard-boiled detective novel, but neither this nor any other aspect of Giardinelli’s previously published novels could have prepared his readers for the vast historical and human scope and the narrative richness of *Santo Oficio de la memoria*.<sup>6</sup>

Giardinelli began to write *Santo Oficio* on April 20, 1982. In an interview he has explained the genesis of the novel:

The Malvinas War had started eighteen days before. I was living in Mexico and, like the whole Argentine community, I was astonished. “Where is this crazy country going?” was the question. . . . And I don’t know why nor how but the first chapter came out. There was a vague idea of doing a novel that would describe the country from its origins (in this case since 1896). The death that occurs is real. It’s my great-grandfather’s death. . . . My intention in the novel was to get up to the Malvinas War. I wanted to know where my country was going.

Then that triggered off the idea: What in hell had brought Argentines to a military dictatorship as ferocious as the last one?<sup>7</sup>

As Giardinelli kept working on the novel, he did more and more research, reading historians from the political right as well as the left. His consciousness of the problematic history of Argentina grew apace with the story of the fictional Domeniconelle family. Meanwhile, as he explains in the interview with Campos, he was accumulating pages that contained isolated stories which he felt were not suitable for short stories but did not cohere into a novel. As Giardinelli puts it, “Eran como discursos inconexos que me salían con voces de mujeres” ‘They were like disconnected discourses that came out in the voices of women’ (51). These voices told the story of the family and focused particularly on the subject of immigration. By the time the war ended he had hundreds of pages, but realized that he had been addressing the wrong question; the right question was not “where are we going?” but rather “where do we come from?” This new question prompted him to

research the history of immigration to Argentina, and as he read into the immigration literature, he realized that the image of Argentina that emerged was radically different from that of the official history:

We come from ships. We come from very uncultured people, rustic farmers who came at the end of the century to make their fortune in America. In 1880 Argentina had a million inhabitants. In 1900 there were five million, of whom three and a half million were foreigners. In Buenos Aires 70% of the population didn't speak Spanish, and two out of every three persons were men. That explains why the tango then was danced by men. Prostitution then became an important product of importation. (51)

Despite having amassed about a thousand pages by the time of his return to Argentina in 1985, Giardinelli felt that the nature of the work was still eluding him. As he tells it, it was only when he visited his family at home in the Chaco, that he found a way out of his impasse. His three aunts had made ravioli in honor of his homecoming. As they all ate, he heard them remembering the stories his great-grandfather used to tell, and stories about the Giardinellis in Italy and the town from which they came. This gave him the key to the novel:

"Hell!" I thought, "this is a gift from God!" I made a date for next Sunday: "I want you three alone without the uncles and nephews." I brought a cassette recorder and that Sunday I recorded six or seven cassettes. My aunts told me what the town was like, what they were like, how girls lived in those days, their fears, their loves, the politics, the moral code, what daily life was like, what movies they saw. Everything from the 1910s to the '50s or '60s. They covered half a century. And it all fit perfectly into that world of scattered pages I had. (51)

After traveling to Chiletto in Italy, the town of his ancestors on the Adriatic, he conceived the plan of a novel without a narrator: "Surgió como una novela polifónica. Una concepción de coro griego, donde cada uno da un paso al frente y dice su discurso" 'It emerged as a polyphonic novel. A type of Greek chorus where everyone steps forward and makes his speech' (51). It was then that he sketched the plan and in particular the characters of the Nona (grandmother), Franca (the youngest of the aunts), and the important character El Tonto de la

Buena Memoria (The Idiot of the Good Memory), the idiot savant scribe who writes the whole novel from the insane asylum. Giardinelli states that he was motivated to write a novel without a narrator because so many Argentine novels have omniscient third person narrators. He was also looking for a discourse that would be historically anchored but different from the documentary literature and fiction related to the Dirty War and the “disappeared” (51).

Although Giardinelli mentions his desire to write in the tradition of Argentine novelists like Leopoldo Marechal (in *Adán Buenosayres*, 1948), Ernesto Sábato (in *Sobre héroes y tumbas*, 1961), Filloy and Cortázar, *Santo Oficio de la memoria* reveals that he clearly has a deep appreciation and knowledge of the work of Manuel Puig, Juan Rulfo, and William Faulkner. Structurally the forebears of *Santo Oficio* are Puig's experiments in doing away with a narrator in novels like *Heartbreak Tango* and *The Buenos Aires Affair*, Rulfo's chorus of living and dead voices in *Pedro Páramo*, and Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*.<sup>8</sup>

Alexis Márquez Rodríguez has rightly pointed out the general similarity between *Santo Oficio* and Faulkner's novel and the basic difference in scope, but a detailed comparative analysis of the structure of the two novels will permit us to draw certain conclusions regarding the ideological and aesthetic motivations behind Giardinelli's chosen narrative structure. To begin with it is necessary to speak not only of *As I Lay Dying*, but also of *The Sound and the Fury*. In terms of narrative structure it is the former that serves as Giardinelli's model, but the major exception to the rather regular structure of *Santo Oficio*, its major asymmetrical feature and therefore worthy of attention, is related to *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). As readers of *Santo Oficio* gradually discover, the voice that recovers and records all other voices is that of El Tonto de la Buena Memoria, a character inspired by Benjy the idiot “man-child” in *The Sound and the Fury*, and Juan Rulfo's mentally retarded first person narrator Macario in the short story of the same name.<sup>9</sup>

The sections labelled “El Tonto de la Buena Memoria” present dialogues, narrate in the third person, and in the first person (in italics) when he is speaking about his own situation. As readers, therefore, we come to realize that this is the most inclusive discourse, the probable source for all other discourses of the novel. This conclusion is further reinforced by the fact that the major activity of El Tonto de la Buena Memoria is his incessant writing down of everything he hears in

notebooks that he says he will only show to his brother Pedro when he comes back to Argentina. Although Pedro is an engineer, not a writer, his need to reconstruct the story of the Domeniconelle family, as well as his “cuadernos de apuntes” ‘travel notebooks’ establishes a special kinship between the exiled brother and the idiot brother, particularly since the validity of their reconstructive and recording activities is questioned by others. Even Aunt Franca, who has so much in common with him, wonders why Pedro, her favorite nephew, takes such pains to piece together the family history:

In his letters he does nothing but ask questions and he wants to know more and more, as if we were the Medicis or the Borgias, a family worth the trouble reconstructing instead of one like ours: a bunch of women and a few men anything but illustrious, all marked by tragic deaths that have never been cleared up, and by a crazy old woman, admirable but crazy, who never gets tired of making our lives miserable whenever she can and who knows perfectly well who will put up with her and who won't. (60)

El Tonto de la Buena Memoria, on the other hand, is even considered dangerous by his own family. Although they primarily fear his uncontrolled sexuality, his perfect memory and his constant recording in his beautiful calligraphy of conversations he overhears are considered just as dangerous by his family. He himself feels that it is his writing down the truth that really worries them: “¿No te das cuenta de que yo nunca miento y por eso no me soportan, y siempre al que niegan es a mí? ¿No sabés que les doy miedo por eso y no porque soy peligroso, como dicen?” [in italics in text]. ‘Don’t you realize that I never lie and that is why they can’t stand me, and I’m always the one they deny? Don’t you realize that’s why they’re afraid of me and not because I’m dangerous, as they say?’ (173). Memory, particularly written memory, is therefore considered dangerous or at best bothersome and pointless.

Before we can proceed to interpret the structure of *Santo Oficio* it will be fruitful to compare its structure to that of its model, *As I Lay Dying*. As neither Faulkner nor Giardinelli provides a table of contents in his novel, the reader never has a clear sense of the overall structure of the novels. The four appendices will help to provide a bird’s-eye-view of the novels. Appendix 1 shows the distribution of the 59 chapters or sections in Faulkner’s novel. Appendix 2 shows the 15 narrators of *As I Lay Dying* and the number of sections they narrate. At



first reading we feel that the novel is randomly narrated, and although we know that certain characters narrate more than others, we are not too conscious of a major imbalance. In fact, however, a major imbalance does exist and it is responsible for the perspectival emphasis in Faulkner's novel. Darl has the greatest number of sections (19), followed by Vardaman (10), Tull (6), and Cash (5). Thus Faulkner chooses to present a bulk (50%) of the story (29 sections out of a total of 59) from the point of view of Vardaman, a child, and Darl, an adult who goes mad. Although the novel is indeed polyphonic, the voices that predominate are those of the most alienated characters: the boy who is too young to understand most of what is going on, and the brother who doesn't fit into the family, the artist-like observer of their passions.

An examination of the structure of *Santo Oficio de la memoria* reveals that Giardinelli has not only followed Faulkner's model *grosso modo* but has also followed a similar strategy in terms of selecting certain voices that will rise insistently above the chorus. Appendix 3 shows the distribution of the 106 sections of *Santo Oficio*, while Appendix 4 gives the breakdown of narrators and the number of sections they narrate. Of all the characters who speak, Pedro has the greatest number of sections (14), or 22 if we count his travel notebook (*Cuaderno de apuntes*) and Pedro's letter to his sister Alberta. He is followed closely by his brother El Tonto de la Buena Memoria with 14 sections (Giardinelli seems to underscore the spiritual kinship between the brothers by assigning each 14 sections labelled with their names), his aunt Franca with 11, and La Nona (the Grandmother) with 8. Thus Giardinelli chooses to present a bulk of his novel (36 sections out of a total of 106) from the point of view of an exile and his idiot savant brother. In this he follows closely Faulkner's strategy but departs significantly by assigning 19 sections to two women, Franca and La Nona. Four out of the 23 characters who narrate account for 55 sections, or slightly more than half of *Santo Oficio*. Clearly, polyphony is not to be equated with an equal allotment of narrative time. Although all 23 narrators enrich his narrative with their different voices, psychologies, historical perspectives, and political orientations, Giardinelli entrusts Pedro, El Tonto de la Buena Memoria, Franca and La Nona with the task of setting the general tone of the novel. That tone predictably is one of stubborn, vociferous dissent and an instinctive rejection of any kind of official silence. Memory (El Tonto and Pedro), uncompromising candor ("Todos decían que la tía Franca hacía honor

a su nombre porque jamás se guardaba lo que pensaba. . . . Pero lo que no decían era que no necesariamente por chismosa, sino por sincera.” ‘Everybody said that Aunt Franca was true to her name because she always said what she thought. . . . But what they didn’t say was that it wasn’t necessarily because she was a gossip but because she was sincere.’ [59]), and the need to speak and be heard, to write and be read, are the common denominators of these otherwise rather dissimilar characters. Through them, Giardinelli deftly solves the problem of how to manage the direction of a polyphonic novel without violating its structure through glaring, overt manipulation of the discourse of the characters. On the surface it would appear that Faulkner and Giardinelli act as recorders who catch voices. In fact both authors have a lot that they want to communicate to their readers, but the polyphonic novel is structurally and conceptually ill-adapted to preaching from the pulpit.

Readers of *As I Lay Dying* have remarked how at certain important moments in the narrative the discourse of a particular character (most often Darl) seems to be taken over by a more learned and lyrical voice that is generally identified as Faulkner’s own. In Faulkner this unannounced shift in discourse seems to be motivated by the author’s need to cover certain ground with his own poetic discourse, a kind of shaking off of the linguistic and cultural limits he has imposed on himself by composing his novel through the voices of his characters. These shifts in discourse are unmarked and there is no indication that Faulkner intends us to read these passages as belonging to a different discourse or consciousness. In one of the sections narrated by Darl, the shift is quite apparent:

“Let Jewel take the end of the rope and cross upstream of us and brace it,” I say. “Will you do that, Jewel?”

Jewel watches me, hard. He looks quick at Cash, then back at me, his eyes alert and hard. “I don’t give a damn. Just so we do something. Setting here, not lifting a goddamn hand . . .”

“Let’s do that, Cash,” I say.

“I reckon we’ll have to,” Cash says.

*The river itself is not a hundred yards across, and Pa and Vernon are the only things in sight not of that single monotony of desolation leaning with that terrific quality a little from right to left, as though we had reached the place where the motion of the wasted world accelerates just before the final precipice. Yet they appear*

*dwarfed. It is as though the space between us were time: an irrevocable quality. . . .* (139) [My italics]

Even if we grant Darl a special status as the sensitive brother who has a poetic soul, it stretches credulity that he would be capable of expressing himself in this manner. This is a stylized device Faulkner uses to convey the thoughts of his characters when he needs them to say certain things. *As I Lay Dying*, therefore, is made up of first person narrations by 15 characters, dialogues they hear or remember, and the intrusion of a poetic discourse when the thoughts of characters (most often Darl and Vardaman) are recorded.<sup>10</sup>

The case of *Santo Oficio* is more complex, primarily because Giardinelli allows for a permeability of discourses. To begin with, the author's own description of *Santo Oficio* as a work where the characters, like members of a Greek chorus, step forward and each has his say is meant to give a general impression of the work but is hardly complete. Giardinelli's postmodern homage to Faulkner's modern aesthetics typically contains, along with the "quoting" of the model (the division of the novel into chapters assigned to different voices), a radical departure (the fact that those voices sometimes spill over into sections assigned to other voices). Ultimately the most significant differences between *Santo Oficio* and *As I Lay Dying* arise from a fundamental ontological distinction: *As I Lay Dying* is meant to be "heard" by its readers; *Santo Oficio* is meant to be read as a text. Faulkner's novel is meant to be a collection of voices, and the author makes no textual provision for their setting down by any scribe or editor. Although readers of Giardinelli do not suspect this until well into the novel, they are not "hearing" the narrative voices but reading a textual transcription of those voices whose copyist is El Tonto de la Buena Memoria. The foregrounded textuality and metafictional character of *Santo Oficio* explain the permeability of its 106 sections. Except for the stylized authorial intrusions that have been discussed, the chapters in Faulkner's novel are hermetically sealed; we as readers understand that the consciousness of the character whose name heads the section is responsible for the totality of its content. In *Santo Oficio* all sections are subject to being interrupted by the musings of the scribe, and Pedro's sections in particular are in addition frequently haunted by the apparitions of La Nona (actually his great-grandmother). Chapter 22, which is labelled "El Tonto de la Buena Memoria," furnishes a particularly rich mixture of discourses. Here is how it begins:

—*Pietro, ¿ti vuole ritornare al Chaco?* — preguntó la Nona, sacudiéndose el polvo de la ropa.

Pedro abrió los ojos, tanteó las gafas en la mesa de luz y se las calzó. Le costó fijar la mirada en la vieja. Toda mugrienta, con telarañas en el pelo y muy nerviosa, caminaba por la habitación como esos perros que huelen el pasto dando vueltas alrededor de sí mismos mientras buscan un sitio propicio para sus deposiciones.

—*¿Ti vuole?*

—Sí, si pudiera sí, pero. . . ¿qué hacés aquí?

—Vine. No me asienta la altura, pero tenía que verte porque sé que siempre estás pensando en volver. Al Chaco, en particular. . . . Entonces se acercó a él, con inesperada ternura, y le pasó la mano por el pelo mientras Pedro sonreía tenuemente, removiendo apenas la yerba, alerta a que no hirviera el agua de la pava que había puesto otra vez sobre el fuego.

*Y era una mano larga, larga, y delicada y amorosa como yo jamás sentí. La envidia me dio rabia. Sí, me dio. Y ahora también.*

—*Pietro, ti vuole ritornare al Chaco?* —Nona asked, brushing the dust off her clothes.

Pedro opened his eyes, felt for his glasses on the night table and put them on. It took him a moment to focus on the old woman. She was filthy, had cobwebs in her hair, was very nervous, and walked around the room like those dogs that sniff the grass circling around themselves until they find the right spot to make a deposit.

—*Ti vuole?*

—Yes, I would if I could, but . . . what are you doing here?

—I came. The altitude is bad for me, but I had to see you because I know that you're always thinking about returning. Especially to the Chaco. . . . Then she came near him, with unexpected tenderness, and stroked his hair while Pedro smiled faintly, stirring the maté, making sure that the water in the kettle he had put back on the burner wouldn't boil.

*And it was a long hand, long and delicate and loving like I never felt. The envy made me furious. Yes it did. And now also. (131-33)*

The comments in italics are to be attributed to El Tonto de la Buena Memoria. In this passage Pedro is in Mexico and his great-grandmother, who comes to visit him from Argentina, would be (if we assume she is alive) about 121 years old at the time of this unexplained

but charming visit. It is never made clear in the text if she is a ghost, a dream, or simply a fantasy of Pedro's. After Nona disappears Pedro works all night on an engineering project. When he falls asleep, El Tonto announces "Esto fue lo que Pedro soñó" 'This is what Pedro dreamed,' (134) and what follows is an account of a long conversation in a café between Pedro and his friend the writer Juan (Rulfo) who explains why he never finished his novel *La cordillera*, and tells him a short story he has been working on but has not managed to write.

Although many sections of *Santo Oficio* do not contain several discourses (section 21, for example, which precedes the one quoted is limited to the viewpoint and voice of Enrico, Pedro's father), the passage quoted above is representative of the technique of narrative permeability that Giardinelli employs throughout the novel.

In terms of narrative technique this innovation of Giardinelli's is unprecedented in the already impressive canon of the Latin American narrative. The permeability of the various narrative discourses of *Santo Oficio* should not be confused with Borges's "Chinese boxes," Vargas Llosa's "communicating vessels," or any narrative model from the writers of the Boom who adhere generally to the aesthetic values and practices of Modern writers like Faulkner or Joyce. The narrative techniques of Modernity and the Latin American Boom challenge our received notions of time, space, and personality through various narrative rearrangements that programmatically fail to fulfill our literary expectations, but they do so in a contained, orderly, and discreet manner. Complex as these narrative puzzles may be, time and again as readers we come to realize that as in the case of Borges' labyrinths and even Joyce's *Ulysses*, there is always a key to the puzzle. Their authors' respect of the principle of symmetry and order always allows readers to "set the novels straight" in the end. Thus the precise clockwork and coherent design of the masterpieces of the Boom (Carlos Fuentes' *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1962), Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Green House*, (1966), never fail to fill us with awe, but these novels despite their architectural intricacy can be reconstructed and naturalized by their readers since the principle of order itself has never been abandoned by their authors.

True to its postmodern moment, *Santo Oficio* defies both closure and naturalization.<sup>11</sup> Faced with the task of charting *Santo Oficio*, both reader and critic must surrender ultimately before the life-like irregularity, unpredictability, and open-endedness of this true "opera aperta."

According to the beautiful and terrible Shakespearean formula dear to Faulkner, life is “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” Giardinelli’s *Santo Oficio* seems to have been written to refute the second proposition of that famous quotation. In the political and historical context of the Argentina of the ’80s in which Giardinelli wrote his novel, against a background of repression, exile, torture, death, imprisonment and “disappearances,” life must have seemed at best the tale of an idiot that signified nothing. But Giardinelli, like many of his generation, appears to have realized that he could not afford to share the pessimism that the previous generation of Latin American writers had accepted in the far more hopeful political circumstances of the ’60s. Paradoxically, therefore, we find that a writer like Giardinelli, who has shared the bitter experiences of his generation, rejects the cynical attitude that would follow logically. That rejection of cynicism, the refusal to shrug one’s shoulders and accept “reality,” is grounded on the moral imperative to denounce the silence, the acceptance and pragmatism that made possible the barbarity of the Dirty War. In the quotation printed on the back cover of *Santo Oficio*, Juan Rulfo has captured, perhaps better than anyone else, Giardinelli’s ability to derive optimism from bitter experience: “Mempo Giardinelli knows how to banish bitterness, perhaps because exile has taught him to endure that and much more: perhaps art, the great artist in him, makes him transform painful things into a profoundly creative literature of optimistic resignation.”<sup>12</sup>

For Giardinelli, therefore, the idiot’s tale signifies everything because he is resigned to the fact that the only meaning that can possibly be found to the question “where do we come from?” (and any other question worth the asking) is only to be found in the idiot’s tale. El Tonto de la Buena Memoria functions in *Santo Oficio* as an allegory of the national conscience, the national memory, the embodiment of all the *desaparecidos*, all exiles, and all internal exiles during the Dirty War. El Tonto writes out of fury because he won’t be silenced; he won’t allow memory to disappear. He is the one all want to deny, and all want to isolate him and declare him dangerous.

*Santo Oficio de la memoria* is the irregular sum of many subjectivities. As such it is the ideal medium to give an open-ended and politically responsible account of Argentine history in this century. *Santo Oficio* allows readers to construct a story that could not be told by an authoritarian omniscient narrator, since its implicit ideology is opposed fundamentally to any kind of authorized or official history. It

could not be told in the first person like *Qué solos se quedan los muertos* because unlike that novel it is not a dirge of exile, alienation, loneliness, and loss, but an affirmation of the hope of "recovered democracy," a novel of belonging, solidarity and recovery. It is the multivoiced account that chronicles the recovery of something the author never had before, a sense of origins that he won in exile where he was haunted for nine years by the relentless inquisitions of memory.

\* \* \*

Appendix 1: *Structure of As I Lay Dying*

1. Darl	31. Tull
2. Cora	32. Darl
3. Darl	33. Tull
4. Jewel	34. Darl
5. Darl	35. Vardaman
6. Cora	36. Tull
7. Dewey Dell	37. Darl
8. Tull	38. Cash
9. Anse	39. Cora
10. Darl	40. Addie
11. Peabody	41. Whitfield
12. Darl	42. Darl
13. Vardaman	43. Armstid
14. Dewey Dell	44. Vardaman
15. Vardaman	45. Moseley
16. Tull	46. Darl
17. Darl	47. Vardaman
18. Cash	48. Darl
19. Vardaman	49. Vardaman
20. Tull	50. Darl
21. Darl	51. Vardaman
22. Cash	52. Darl
23. Darl	53. Cash
24. Vardaman	54. Peabody
25. Darl	55. MacGowan
26. Anse	56. Vardaman
27. Darl	57. Darl
28. Anse	58. Dewey Dell
29. Samson	59. Cash
30. Dewey Dell	

Appendix 2: 15 NARRATORS OF *AS I LAY DYING*

Darl	[19 sections]
Vardaman	[10 sections]
Tull	[6 sections]
Cash	[5 sections]
Dewey Dell	[4 sections]
Anse	[3 sections]
Cora	[3 sections]
Peabody	[2 sections]
Samson	[1 section]
Addie	[1 section]
Jewel	[1 section]
Whitfield	[1 section]
Armstid	[1 section]
Moseley	[1 section]
MacGowan	[1 section]



### Appendix 3: Structure of Santo Oficio de la Memoria

#### **PARTE I**

1. FRANCA
2. GAETANO
3. ENRICO
4. EL TONTO
5. ANUNZZIATTA

6. ROSA
7. PEDRO
8. AIDA

#### **PARTE II**

9. EL TONTO
10. FRANCA
11. LA NONA
12. MICAELA
13. ALBERTA
14. LA NONA
15. MAGDALENA
16. CUADERNO
17. LA NONA
18. FRANCA
19. ROSA
20. SEBASTIANA
21. ENRICO
22. EL TONTO
23. GIULIANA
24. GAETANO
25. SILVINA
26. ROSA
27. LUCIANA

#### **PARTE III**

28. AIDA
29. FRANCA
30. EL TONTO
31. ANUNZZIATTA
32. CUADERNO
33. [!?] MICAELA
34. PEDRO
35. GAETANO
36. PAOLA
37. LA NONA
38. FRANCA
39. ENRICO
40. PEDRO

41. ANUNZZIATTA

42. EL TONTO

#### **PARTE IV**

43. GAETANO
44. CUADERNO
45. LUCIANA
46. CARTA
- [PEDRO A ALBERTA]
47. EL TONTO
48. FRANCA
49. MAGDALENA
50. PEDRO
51. ROBERTA
52. ALBERTA
53. EL TONTO
54. AURELIA
55. PEDRO
56. LAURA
57. PEDRO
58. LA NONA

#### **PARTE V**

59. AIDA
60. PAOLA
61. ENRICO
62. MICAELA
63. FRANCA
64. CUADERNO
65. ROSA
66. SILVINA
67. EL TONTO
68. PEDRO

#### **PARTE VI**

69. EL TONTO
70. ANUNZZIATTA
71. PEDRO
72. VITTORIA
73. MICAELA
74. CUADERNO
75. SEBASTIANA
76. PEDRO
77. FRANCA
78. RICCARDA
79. EL TONTO

80. PEDRO
81. GAETANO
82. GIULIANA
83. PAOLA
84. CUADERNO
85. ARTURA
86. PEDRO

#### **PARTE VII**

87. ROSA
88. FRANCA
89. LA NONA
90. EL TONTO
91. PEDRO
92. AIDA
93. LAURA
94. CUADERNO
95. FRANCA
96. GAETANO

#### **PARTE VIII**

97. EL TONTO
98. LA NONA
99. PEDRO
100. EL TONTO

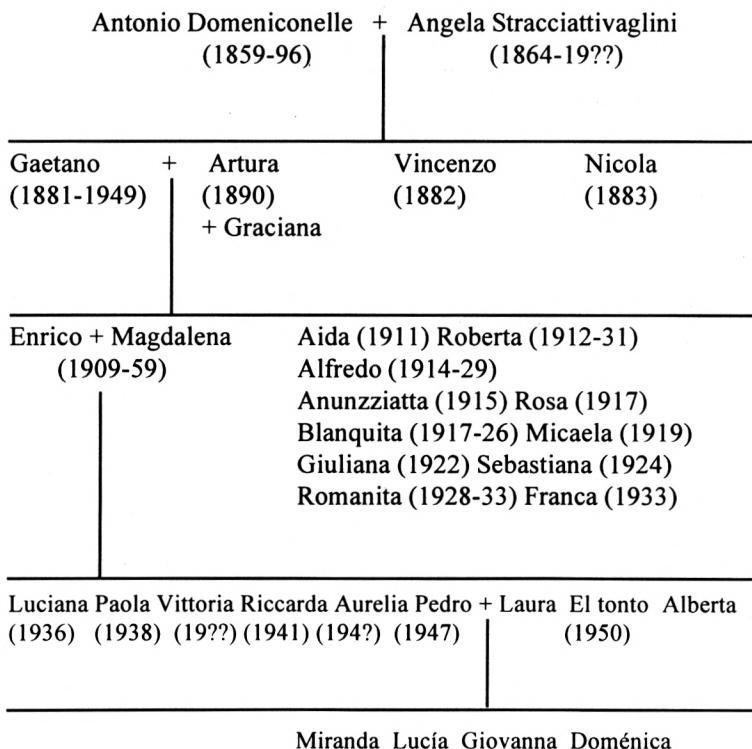
#### **PARTE IX**

101. PEDRO
102. LA NONA
103. EL TONTO
104. FRANCA
105. AIDA
106. [ ]

**Appendix 4:** Sections per character in *Santo Oficio de la Memoria*.

PEDRO [14 SECTIONS]  
NOTEBOOKS, PEDRO [7 SECTIONS]  
LETTER P TO ALBERTA [1 SECTION]  
PEDRO TOTAL [22 SECTIONS OUT OF 106]  
EL TONTO [14 SECTIONS]  
FRANCA [11 SECTIONS]  
LA NONA [8 SECTIONS]  
GAETANO [6 SECTIONS]  
ROSA [5 SECTIONS]  
AIDA [5 SECTIONS]  
ENRICO [4 SECTIONS]  
ANUNZZIATTA [4 SECTIONS]  
MICAELA [4 SECTIONS]  
PAOLA [3 SECTIONS]  
ALBERTA [2 SECTIONS]  
MAGDALENA [2 SECTIONS]  
SEBASTIANA [2 SECTIONS]  
GIULIANA [2 SECTIONS]  
SILVINA [2 SECTIONS]  
LUCIANA [2 SECTIONS]  
LAURA [2 SECTIONS]  
ROBERTA [1 SECTION]  
AURELIA [1 SECTION]  
VITTORIA [1 SECTION]  
RICCARDA [1 SECTION]  
ARTURA [1 SECTION]  
[     ] [1 SECTION No name, Tonto de la buena memoria?]

# **Appendix 5** **Family Tree of the Domeniconelle\***



\* \* \*

\* No family tree is provided in the novel. I have been able to construct this family tree by a combination of deduction and inference.

## Notes

1. Although Giardinelli's novels have been translated into many languages (*Luna caliente* alone has appeared in twelve languages), to date none of Giardinelli's novels have been published in English. As several translations are in progress, this situation will soon be remedied. For the most complete bibliography on Giardinelli see Kohut.

2. Giardinelli explained his preference for the term "escritores de la democracia recuperada" 'writers of recovered democracy' in a lecture given at the University of Virginia on March 22, 1994. This lecture entitled "Historia y Novela en la Argentina de los 90" will be published by *Review* in the Fall of 1994.

3. See Alexis Márquez Rodríguez, "Mempo Giardinelli: con el esquema de Faulkner."

4. Strictly speaking, Giardinelli does provide a table of contents, but it only lists the nine parts of the novel and the corresponding page numbers; it does not list the 106 sections or chapters. The nine sections of the novel seem to reflect the numerological preferences of one of the main character narrators, La Nona. For La Nona nine is the perfect number because it is the number of circles in Dante's *Inferno*. Nine is also the number of years that Pedro was exiled in Mexico.

5. Information given to me by the author. The story in question is narrated as a dream of Pedro's, the character who by age and other circumstances is roughly modeled on Giardinelli himself (134-41).

6. Giardinelli has spoken of *Qué solos se quedan los muertos* as his "farewell" to the genre of detective novels, calling it "the anti-detective novel" where he enters the "essay-novel" and "makes fun" of the detective novel. Campos (52).

7. Campos (50). Unless otherwise indicated all translations are mine.

8. It is interesting that Gabriel García Márquez's early short novel *The Leafstorm* is also modelled on *As I Lay Dying*.

9. It occurs to me that the manner in which the readers of *Santo Oficio* discover that El Tonto de la Buena Memoria is the scribe who sets down these memories is similar to the way readers of Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* discover that the voices that narrate the novel are voices of the dead. The information about the dual inspiration of the character comes from a conversation with the author, March 1994.

10. Another example is found in a section narrated by the little boy Vardaman when he is talking about the fish he caught:

"Then hit want. Hit hadn't happened then. Hit was a-laying right there on the ground. And now she's gittin ready to cook hit."

It is dark. I can hear wood, silence: I know them. But not living sounds, no even him. *It is as though the dark were resolving him out of his integrity, into an unrelated scattering of components—snuffings and stampings; smells of cooling flesh and ammoniac hair; and illusion of a co-ordinated whole of splotched hide and strong bones within which, detached and secret and familiar, an is different from my is. . . .*

"Cooked and et. Cooked and et." (55) [My italics]

11. See Hutcheon (23, 176-77).

12. Since Juan Rulfo died in 1986, his statement about Giardinelli, of course, antedates the publication of *Santo Oficio*.

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